

REMARKS

The Office Action dated June 3, 2008 has been received and carefully noted. The following remarks are submitted as a full and complete response thereto.

Claims 1 and 3-5 are pending in the application, of which claim 1 is independent. It is believed that all grounds for rejection in the Office Action have been addressed and that the present application is currently in condition for allowance in view of the following comments. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1 and 3-5 are therefore respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The Office Action rejected claims 1 and 3-5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0077919 (Lin) in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0073114 (Nicastro), which was cited in the prior Office Action dated December 19, 2007. In particular, the Office Action took that position that Nicastro disclosed all limitations of the single independent claim 1, except for an information management means that manages a correspondence between a stored balance and a new balance value, but that this deficiency is cured by Lin. As described below, Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because Lin and Nicastro do not disclose every recitation of the present claims. Applicants further request clarification on which of Lin and Nicastro are the primary reference and the secondary references in this rejection since different legal and technical needed, clarification is requested.

Independent claim 1, from which claims 3-5 depend, relates to a balance management system for managing balances occurring in each of a plurality of processes. The system includes information acquiring means for acquiring, for a process, first information on a process item and a balance amount associated with the process item, wherein the first information is acquired from a first terminal corresponding to the process. The system further includes information management means for managing, for the process, second information on a balance of a balance item and third information on a correspondence between the balance of the balance item and the balance amount of the process item. The system also includes information updating means for updating the second information on the balance of the balance item, on the basis of the third information managed by the information management means and the first information acquired by the information acquiring means. The system further includes information providing means for providing a second terminal with the second information corresponding to one or more processes managed by the information management means, and first means for enabling a flexible setting of the third information according to a user's input.

Applicants note that, as described in the background section of the present application, embodiments of the present invention relate to the technical challenge of managing and tracking balances in multiple processes, where, for example, the equipment costs fluctuate due to occurrences of a decrease (expenditure) in a money balance and an increase (income) in a material balance and due to a high or low price of equipment purchased. With increasingly complicated products, however, the number of processes

becomes enormous and each process is more complicated. This results in too many types of expenditures and incomes and too many patterns of fluctuations in each process. Thereby, in some cases, balances in a plurality of processes are entangled, and it is hard for a user to grasp the balance conditions.

In contrast, Nicastro generally relates to a system for defining and managing an asset, such as a building under construction. The system in Nicastro includes a data store for item specification data provided on a host computer coupled to a network, and the system further includes a data input toolset, a data modification toolset including project management tools; and a teamwork toolset. The data modification toolset may include at least one item procurement system, a cost management system, a project management system, and an information collection system. Each system includes a database interface allowing the system to retrieve, use and modify data subject to permissions granted by the project manager.

Thus, Nicastro provides a system in which parts of an asset are defined, and costs for each of these parts is determined and stored. Nicastro does not relate to tracking the balances over multiple processes, and changes in the balances (i.e., balance amounts). Instead, Nicastro discloses tracking costs for parts of an asset, and not for tracking the balances associated with each of these parts when producing multiple assets. While the Office Action at the first paragraph of page 3 asserted that tracking costs for part is the same as tracking balances, this assumption is incorrect since, as described in the present application, costs are a component of the balance. Moreover, there is no way to adapt Nicastro to track balances associated with multiple components since, for example,

Nicastro does not does not disclose forming balances amount in view of expenditures and costs.

Likewise, Lin also does not relate to balance management. Instead, Lin discloses a collaboration commerce method in which customers interact with venders without needing to know an entire collaboration commerce operation. The method of Lin includes a customer ordering a commodity through a web page and transmitting the commodity ordering information to a collaboration server. The commodity ordering information is transmitted to enterprise resource planning servers and executed the integrated operation on the enterprise resource planning servers to generate a customized table list. The customized table list is then sent back to the customer for confirmation.

Referring to claim 1, the combination of Nicastro and Lin does not disclose at least the following limitation.

information acquiring means for acquiring, for a process (p_j), first information on a process item (x_j) and a balance amount (Δq_j) associated with the process item (x_j), wherein the first information is acquired from a first terminal (10) corresponding to the process (p_j)

As described above, Nicastro tracks costs and not a changing balance for a process. Moreover, there is no suggestion in Nicastro of the first terminal associated with each of the processes. Instead, Nicastro in the section of paragraph [0153], as cited in the Office Action, relates to tracking various business accounting measures such as cost and revenues but does not, in any way, disclose tracking balances for a process. As also described above, Lin contains no disclosure relevant to this limitation.

Continuing with claim 1, the combination of Nicastro and Lin also does not disclose the following limitation.

information updating means for updating the second information on the balance (q_{jk}) of the balance item (b_k), on the basis of the third information managed by the information management means and the first information acquired by the information acquiring means;

As described above, Nicastro tracks costs and does not disclose the defining of a correspondence between the stored balance and a new balance value. Thus, Nicastro does not disclose a structure for updating process balance to reflect the changes. In paragraph [0352] and FIG. 10 of Nicastro, as cited in the Office Action, user input means are disclosed, but there is no teaching or suggestion in this and other sections of Nicastro that the user input is “on the basis of the third information managed by the information management means and the first information acquired by the information acquiring means” as recited in claim 1. As also described above, Lin contains no disclosure relevant to this limitation.

The combination of Nicastro and Lin also does not disclose the following limitation in claim 1.

information providing means for providing a second terminal (20) with the second information of the balance (q_{jk}) of the balance item (b_k) managed by the information management means

As previously noted, Nicastro tracks costs and not a changing balance for a process. Moreover, there is no suggestion in Nicastro of the second terminal, distinct from the first terminal, displaying the balances associated with each of the processes. In discussing this limitation, the Office Action cited to paragraph [0043] of Nicastro that relates to a

conventional presentation of business data, but this and other disclosure in Nicastro does not relate to the recited information providing means. For example, Nicastro does not teach or suggest the limitation of “providing of the second information of the balance (q_{jk}) of the balance item (b_k).” Also, as described above, Lin contains no disclosure relevant to this limitation.

Continuing with claim 1, the combination of Nicastro and Lin also does not disclose “first means for enabling a flexible setting of the third information according to a user's input.” In particular, certain embodiments of the present application allow the user not only to set the third information but to also flexibly select and/or change the third information, thereby enabling to manage the balance of the balance item flexibly according to various conditions in each process. These advantages are described, for example, at paragraphs [0010], [0031], and [0042] of the U.S. patent publication that corresponds to the present application. In contrast, the Office Action cited to paragraph [0313] of Nicastro, which relates to a “virtual area hierarchy,” and this disclosure is not relevant to the recited first means. Also, Applicants urge that the disclosed “virtual area hierarchy” does not relate to the recited flexible setting of “third information on a correspondence (c_k) between said balance (q_{jk}) of said balance item (b_k) and a balance amount (Δq_j) of said process item,” as described below. As also described above, Lin contains no disclosure relevant to this limitation.

Continuing with claim 1, the combination of Nicastro and Lin also does not disclose the following limitation.

information management means for managing, for the process (p_j), second information on a balance (q_{jk}) of a balance item (b_k) and third information on a correspondence (c_k) between said balance (q_{jk}) of said balance item (b_k) and a balance amount (Δq_j) of said process item

As described above, Nicastro tracks costs and revenues, and not a changes in the balance for a process as produced according to the balance of the balance item and to correspondence (c_k) between the balance and the balance amount. Also, Nicastro does not disclose defining a correspondence between the stored balance and a new balance value, as admitted in the Office Action.

In response to this admitted deficiency, the Office Action alleged that this limitation of the information management means is disclosed by Lin. Applicants note, however, that the Office Action cited to Lin at paragraph [0005] and this section merely discloses general electronic business information distribution. Applicants urge that Lin contains no disclosure related to information management related to balances, particularly related to defining a correspondence between the stored balance and a new balance value as recited in claim 1. Thus, the combination of Nicastro and Lin does teach or suggest the limitation of a structure for tracking and evaluating the balance changes.

Likewise, there is no disclosure of Nicastro and Lin of some of the further limitations of the dependent claims. Referring for example to claim 3, there is no suggestion in either Nicastro or Lin of a third terminal, distinct from the first and second terminals, to allow a user to define the correspondences between the balances and the balance amounts or to define these at the third terminal.

Applicants further note that the rejection is legally and technically improper in that the Rejection cites to Lin in view of Nicastro, but primarily relies on Nicastro. As described above, different legal and technical standards apply, depending on which of the reference are the primary and the secondary references. Therefore, this rejection is improper and should be reissued in a new, non-final action.

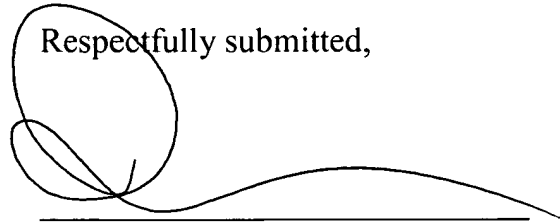
Thus, Applicants submit that Nicastro and Lin, either individually or in combination fails to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in claims 1 and 3-5. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1 and 3-5 are therefore requested.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the claims 1 and 3-5 recites subject matter which is neither disclosed nor suggested by the cited references. It is therefore respectfully requested that these pending rejections be withdrawn, and this application pass to issue with the allowance of pending claims 1 and 3-5.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the applicants' undersigned representative at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

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